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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 002290

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: POLITICAL UPDATE FROM THE SOUTH

REF: A. LAGOS 2288

[1](#)B. LAGOS 2277

[1](#)C. LAGOS 2227

Classified By: Consul General Brian Browne per 1.4 b and d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Abia State Governor Kalu has announced that he will run for President in 2007. Kalu is being partially financed by VP Atiku, who likely is using the abrasive Southeastern governor as a stalking horse. Meanwhile, Senator Nzeribe is bankrolling the very long-shot presidential campaign of Governor Udenwa of Imo State -- placing these two Igbo governors on a collision course. According to sources, Nzeribe wants to occupy the Imo Governor's mansion in 2007. Lagos State Governor Tinubu and the South West Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) George continue to inveigh the other, with George accusing Tinubu of instigating the planned November 16 national labor strike to embarrass President Obasanjo. Tinubu has vehemently denied George's allegation. Privately Tinubu told us he would maintain law and order in Lagos during the strike, despite disagreeing with Obasanjo's deregulation policy. The All People's Grand Alliance (APGA) is hopeful (but perhaps not very realistic) that soon-to-be-concluded court cases disputing the 2003 gubernatorial races in Enugu and Anambra states will redound to the party's benefit. End Summary.

Igbo Governors Stake Claims for 2007 Presidency

[1](#)2. (C) The flamboyant governor of Abia State, Orji Kalu, has announced publicly his intention to seek the 2007 PDP presidential nomination. As ambitious as he is bombastic, Kalu hopes to capitalize on the incessant agitation in the Southeast for an Igbo presidential candidate. By seeking the mantle, he also hopes to refurbish his status as an upcoming youthful Igbo leader. This image has been undermined by a skein of scandals plaguing Kalu's second term and by the rising popularity of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and APGA in the Southeast -- two groups that also lay claim to the political voice of the Igbo. Sources tell us that Kalu has been telephoning many of the Nigeria's political literati informing them of his plans. Kalu has not been completely discreet regarding his backing, intimating to more than one person that VP Atiku is helping to finance his campaign.

(Comment: If Kalu's claim concerning Atiku is true, Atiku is playing one of several possible versions of a cynical, if astute, political game. Atiku may be using Kalu as a diversion to shift President Obasanjo's attention away from Atiku and toward the irascible Kalu who the President probably dislikes more than he dislikes VP Atiku. If this is the case, Kalu may be too taken with himself to induce that he is an expendable weapon in Atiku's armory. Alternatively, Kalu and Atiku could have reached a gentleman's agreement whereby Kalu agreed to be the battering ram with the understanding that should Atiku be offered a presidential slot on the party ticket, Kalu would be offered the VP position. The fault in that plan is that neither actor is a gentleman and such an agreement would crumble at the slightest instance that it no longer served one of the player's optimal interests. End Comment.)

[1](#)3. (C) Meanwhile, Igbo sources indicate that millionaire senator Arthur Nzeribe is bankrolling the long-shot presidential aspirations of Imo State Governor Udenwa. Nzeribe's actions are not borne of affection for the Imo governor. The crafty Nzeribe is known to be pining to occupy the governor's mansion in Owerri, capital of Imo. By dangling a picture of the presidential mansion in front of the taciturn Udenwa Nzeribe hopes Udenwa will turn the keys to Imo over to him in 2007.

Lagos State Governor and PDP SW Chairman In War of Words;
Governor Denies Agitating for National Strike

14. (SBU) Over the past couple of weeks, the local press has been replete with recriminations between Lagos State Governor Ahmed Tinubu and PDP SW Chairman Bode George, a staunch Obasanjo ally. George has gone so far as to accuse Tinubu of bankrolling the scheduled November 16 national strike in an effort to embarrass Obasanjo's administration. George has also threatened to "deal with" Tinubu. Tinubu has vehemently denied George's allegation and has said that he takes neither kindly nor lightly George's threats. (Comment: George has a reputation of political rough-housing. While nothing is proven, his critics link him to many of the incidents of violence in the Southwest against Obasanjo's political opponents. End Comment.)

15. (C) Tinubu told the Consul General the last thing he wanted was violence to occur in Lagos as a result of the strike. Not only would it result in potential loss of life or limb, it would be injurious to business investment. Moreover, he did not want to give Obasanjo a pretext to intervene in Lagos. Consequently Tinubu said he would do all that he could to ensure that things did not "get out of control" during the strike. He said that he had spoken with the police and instructed them not to behave too aggressively. He also said he talked to student leaders and the market women's association, in which his mother wields significant influence. Tinubu criticized Obasanjo's method of fuel price deregulation, arguing that instead of creating a "palliative committee" after-the-fact, Obasanjo, using excess oil revenues, should have provided an economic stimulus package contemporaneous to the price increase, which would have better mitigated the hardships resulting from the price hike.

16. (C) Overall, Tinubu characterized Obasanjo as a "poor strategist." The president, he said, should have moved to solidify a southern base across party lines. This would have isolated his northern rivals -- the real threat. However, since the President is incapable of tolerating and incorporating dissenting viewpoints, the south is more fractured than ever, with the exception that most people are now against Obasanjo, Tinubu said. Tinubu confirmed that he and VP Atiku were talking about "their future." All options are open, he said. Tinubu also believed that the President was still toying with a third term option (reftels).

Courts to give justice to APGA?

17. (C) Peter Obi, the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate believed to have won the 2003 Anambra gubernatorial race told us the court case contesting the election results is progressing well. Obi has also been a frequent flyer to Abuja lately where he is said have had discussions with millionaire businessman Chris Uba. Uba is widely believed to have financed the violence that engulfed Anambra state last week, which resulted in the razing of numerous prominent government facilities, including the governor's mansion. (ref B) It is unlikely that Uba would have engaged in such a brazen gambit just to usher Obi into the governor's mansion -- at least not yet. Uba and other allied kingmakers are probably interested in someone more pliant than the independent-minded Obi.

18. (C) According to an APGA insider who lives in Enugu, the State Security Service (SSS) reportedly stopped Enugu State Governor Nnamani at the Abuja airport as he was attempting to leave the country with five - seven million dollars. The funds were handed over to President Obasanjo who read Nnamani the riot act. This incident may influence the already on-going court case protesting the 2003 elections in Enugu. APGA is also believed to have been the legitimate winner in that state.

BROWNE